

Speech delivered by Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz, President of the Republic of Cuba, at the Commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of his admission to University of Havana, in the Aula Magna of the University of Havana, on November 17, 2005

(excerpted from the original for the LSA-Dowson archives – Ed.)

“Text reviewed and shaped up by its author (*Castro- ed.*) with absolute respect for the integrity of the ideas expressed during his speech”.

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Dear students and professors of universities from all over Cuba;

Dear comrades, leaders and guests who have shared with us so many years of struggle:

This is the most difficult moment, when I must say some words in this Aula Magna, where so many words have already been spoken. A universe of ideas comes to mind, and it's only logical, because time has passed.

You have been very kind to remember that today is a very special day: the 60th anniversary of my timid entry into this University.

There is a photo somewhere, I was just looking at it – I was wearing a jacket, and I have an angry face, or tough, or a nice, or irritated because that photo was not taken on the first day – I think I had already been here for several months, and I was starting to react to so many things, that were happening then. It was not a deep-seated thought. There was this eagerness for ideas, and also a desire to learn, and a spirit that was perhaps rebellious. We were full of dreams that couldn't be described as revolutionary, but certainly full of illusions and energy, and possibly also an anxiety to take up a struggle.

I had been active in sports, I had climbed mountains. I had even been promoted to some kind of Boy Scout lieutenant, I'm not exactly (*sure*) why, and later on they made me a general of the Boy Scout. So, when I was in high school, I had been given more ranks than I have today (Laughter). Because later on, I became Comandante, but nothing more than Comandante – this thing of being Comandante en Jefe (*in Chief*) doesn't mean any more than being chief commander of that small troop of about 82 men, the men who came in the Granma yacht (*the landing of the July 26 Movement guerrilla force led by Fidel and Che Guevara from Mexico initiating the revolt against the dictator Batista –ed.*)

That title came up after the landing, on December 2, 1956. There had to be a chief among those 82 men. Later on, they added the "in". So, little by little, I went from being Chief Commander to being the Commander in Chief when we had more commanders, because that was the highest rank for a long time. I was remembering these things. One has to think about what one was, what one thought about and what feelings one had.

Perhaps some special circumstances in my life made me react. I had to face some difficulties from a very early age and, maybe because of that, I grew up to be some kind of a professional rebel.

I've heard talk about rebels without a cause – but I seem to remember, whenever I think about it, that I was a rebel with many causes – and I thank life that I have continued being a rebel over the years, even today, perhaps more rightly so today, because I have many more ideas and more experience – because I have learned a lot from my own struggle, or because I have a better understanding of this country where we were all born and of this world where we live, this globalized world living now a decisive time for its destiny. I wouldn't dare say a decisive time in its history, because its history is shorter, really brief, when compared to the life span of a species that in recent times, perhaps 3,000 or 4,000 or 5,000 years ago, took its first steps after its long and brief evolution. I say long and brief because it evolved to the point of becoming a homo sapiens some hundreds of thousands of years after life came into existence on this planet, as scholars believe it to be – if my memory doesn't fail me, around 1 or 1.5 billion years ago a life form was born and after that came millions of species. And we are only that, we are one of the species born on this planet. And that is why I said, after a brief and at the same time long life, we have come to this point, in this millennium, which is said to be the third millennium since the beginning of the Christian era.

Why am I circling around this idea? Because I would dare say that today this species is facing a very real and true danger of extinction, and no one can be sure, listen to this well, no one can be sure that it will survive this danger.

Well, the fact that the species would not survive was discussed about 2,000 years ago. I remember that when I was a student I heard of the Apocalypse, a book of prophesy in the Bible. Apparently, 2000 years ago someone realized that this weak species could one day disappear.

Of course, so did the Marxists. I remember Engel's book, “*Dialectics of Nature*”, very well. He said there that one day the light of the Sun would go out, that the fuel feeding the fires of that star which illuminates our world would run out and the light of the Sun would cease to exist. So, a question remains in my mind – a question that maybe you, or your professors, or hundreds of thousands of you have also asked yourselves, and that is if there is any possibility that this species can emigrate to another solar system.

Have you never asked yourselves that question? Well, at some point you will, because many questions come to our minds during our lifetime, particularly these questions, which are asked mostly when there is a reason to do so. I believe that mankind never had more reasons than it does now to wonder about this, because if that Marxist considered the problem of solar heat and light disappearing, and if that scientist considered that one day the solar system would cease to exist, we too, as revolutionaries, giving wings to our imaginations, must ask ourselves what will happen and if there is any hope for this species to escape to another solar system where life already exists or

could exist. All that we know today is that there is one Sun (*star –ed.*) four light years away, among the billions of suns that exist in that enormous outer space of which we still don't know whether it is finite or infinite.

For the little we know of physics and mathematics, of light and the speed of light, and those traveling to the closest planets, nothing has been found, and those who travel to Venus – I believe that Venus was the Roman goddess of love — those that have the privilege of reaching that planet will find hurricanes that are many hundreds of times worse than Katrina or Rita or Michelle or Mitch, or any of the others that hit us with ever increasing fury as it has been said that the temperature on Venus is 400 degrees, and that there are masses of air or heavy atmosphere constantly blowing around.

Those that have been to Mars, a place where they said life could exist – Chavez jokes about the likely existence of life there in the past – and it disappeared, everything vanished. They keep searching for some particle of oxygen or some sign of life. Well, anything could have happened, but the most probable is that no developed life form ever existed on any of these planets. The combination of factors that made life possible occurred after billions of years on planet Earth, this very fragile life form that can only survive between a few limited degrees of temperature, between a few degrees below zero and a few degrees above zero, since nobody can survive in a water temperature of 60 degrees – just 20 seconds without any protection and no human being would survive; a few scores of degrees below zero, with no source of artificial heat, would be enough to cause anyone's death. It was in that limited margin of temperature that life came into being.

We are speaking of life, because whenever we speak of universities, we speak of life.

What are you? If I were asked that question right now, I would have to say that you are life, you are symbols of life.

We have been speaking of events in our lives, in our university, in our Alma Mater, about those of us who came here a few decades ago and who are present here today, those who are in their fresh(*men*) year or are about to graduate, or those who have already graduated and are engaged in tasks that others with less experience would not be able to do.

I was trying to recall how those universities were, what we did, what our concerns were. We were concerned about this island, this tiny island. There was no talk then of globalization – there was no television or Internet – instant communication were not possible from one end of the planet to the other, the telephone had just been invented and there were a few propeller driven airplanes. In my time, back in 1945, our passenger planes could hardly make it to Miami, and that was difficult
(...)

There had been a terrible war (*World War 2—ed.*) that took the lives of some 50

million people. I am speaking of the time in 1945 when I entered the university,(in) September.
(...)

There are so many events to commemorate, and I certainly could not attend that many, and the greatest sorrow of my life would have been not being able to attend, especially at this time, this event in the Aula Magna, as your guest

I have many events to attend everyday and I am speaking with large groups for hours and hours on end, especially with groups of young people, students, with medical brigades who go out to work in glorious missions that almost nobody else in this world would discharge, because no other country could send 1000 medical doctors to a sister nation in Central America. We have sent just such a group that is now confronting pain and death, in the aftermath of the greatest natural tragedy that anyone in that country can remember.

One after another, I have been speaking to these brigades, and I've been seeing them off, the same with those who are leaving for the other side of the world, flying for 18 hours! to where almost simultaneously another of the greatest human tragedies struck. I remember no other catastrophe of such dimensions, because of the place where it (*a hurricane? –ed.*) hit, and the humble people who were affected. These people are shepherds living on very high mountains and the tragedy struck on the eve of winter where the cold is most intense, where there is great poverty while the insensitive world that wastes a trillion dollars each year on advertising to bamboozle the immense majority of humanity that pays for the lies that are spread depriving the human being of the capacity to think for himself, as he is forced to buy a soap that is the same soap with 10 different names, and he must be deceived because a trillion dollars are spent on it and this money is not paid by the companies, it is paid by those who buy the product due to the advertising.

This insensitive world that spends one trillion dollars each year on the military – it's already two trillion — this insensitive world that extracts various trillions of dollars a year from the impoverished masses, from the immense majority of this planet's inhabitants, remains indifferent when it is told that around 100,000 people have died, among them maybe 25,000 or 30,000 children, or that there are 100,000 injured, and the large majority is suffering from bone fractures in their arms and legs of which barely 10% have been operated on, that there are children with mutilated limbs, and young people, women and men, old people.

This is the kind of world we are living in. It is not a world full of goodness, but a world full of egoism. It is not a world of justice, but one full of exploitation, abuse and pillage, where millions of children die every year – and they could be saved – just because they are lacking a few cents worth of medicine, or some vitamins or re-hydration salts and a few dollars worth of food, enough for them to live. They die every year due to injustice, almost as many as died in that colossal war that I mentioned a few minutes ago.

What kind of world is this? What kind of world is this where a barbaric empire (*the USA – ed.*) proclaims its right to launch pre-emptive attacks on 70 or more countries, and is capable of bringing death to any corner of the globe, using the most sophisticated Weapons and killing techniques? It's a world where brutality and force prevail, with hundreds of military bases on the entire planet. There is one of these on our soil, where they arbitrarily intervened after the Spanish colonial power could no longer stand by itself, and when hundreds of thousands of our country's dearest sons—in a population of hardly a million—had perished in a long war lasting almost 30 years. And they left us with the revolting Platt Amendment, attached to an equally repugnant resolution that treacherously gave them the right to intervene in our country whenever they considered there to be a lack of order.

More than a century has gone by and this piece of our territory (*the U.S. Guantanamo base in Eastern Cuba –ed.*) is still forcibly occupied today bringing shame and horror to the world when it is known to have been turned into a torture center, where hundreds of people pulled in from different parts of the world are kept in detention. They do not take them to their own country because there may be laws that would make things difficult for them to illegally hold these people by force, kidnapped for years, overriding any legal procedure, and to the amazement of the entire world, these people are being subjected to sadistic and brutal torture. The world learned of this only when in Iraq they were torturing hundreds of prisoners from a country invaded by the powerful forces of a colossal empire, and where hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians have lost their lives.

New things come up every day. Recently, the press reported that the US government had secret prisons in the satellite countries of Eastern Europe, the same countries that vote in Geneva against Cuba and accuse her of human rights violations. They accuse the country that has never known a torture center in 46 years of Revolution, because our country has never broken that unparalleled tradition in history where not one man has been tortured, that not one person has been known to be tortured. And we would not be the only ones preventing that, it would be our own people that acquired a long time ago an extremely lofty concept of human dignity.

Which of us, which of you, which of our compatriots would quietly admit to a story of torturing even one citizen, in spite of thousands of barbaric acts of terrorism perpetrated against our country, in spite of the thousands of victims of the aggression of that empire that has blockaded us for the last 45 years and has tried to suffocate us by whatever means possible? And now these scoundrels are saying—as one of them recently did before the overwhelming vote of 182 UN members, with one abstention—that the difficulties are a result of our failure, and that great accomplice of the bandit, which is the pro-Nazi state of Israel supports the blockade. We must call it that, because those who commit such crimes are doing so in the name of a people that for more than 1500 years endured persecution and were victims of the most atrocious crimes committed during World War 2. The people of Israel are not to blame for the savage genocide carried out in the service of the empire, leading to a holocaust of yet

another people, the Palestinians. The government of Israel also proclaims the repugnant right to launch pre-emptive attacks against other countries.
(...)

Our Minister of Foreign Affairs has just visited Iran, since Cuba will be the venue of the next Non-Aligned Countries meeting within a year, and Iran is demanding its right to produce nuclear fuel just like any industrialized nation and not be obliged to destroy the reserves of a raw material, which can be used not only as an energy source but also as a raw material for numerous products such as fertilizers, textiles and many others currently used worldwide.

That's the way of the world. Let's see what happens if they decide to bomb Iran in order to destroy any facility used in the production of nuclear fuel.

Iran is a signatory of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and so is Cuba. We have never considered producing nuclear weapons, because we don't need them. Even if they were accessible, how much would they cost and what sense would it make producing a nuclear weapon with an enemy that has thousands of nuclear weapons? It would mean joining the game of nuclear confrontation.

We have a different type of nuclear weapon: it's our ideas. (*Emphasis by the ed.*) We possess a weapon as powerful as nuclear power and it is the immense justice for which we are struggling. Our nuclear weapon is the invincible power of moral weapons. That is why we have never even considered producing them, nor have we ever considered seeking biological weapons, what for? It is to the weapons that defeat death, that defeat AIDS and cancer that we dedicate our resources. That bandit – I can't recall the name of that guy they appointed, was it Bolton, Bordon, whatever – the man who represents the United States at the United Nations, a super-liar, the shameless liar who fabricated the idea that Cuba was doing research in biological warfare in the Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering Center.

They have also accused us of collaborating with Iran, transferring technology for just such a purpose, when what we are really doing is building a factory in partnership with Iran for anti-cancer products – that's what we are really doing. They want to put a stop to that as well. May they all go to hell or wherever they want to go! They're idiots and they're not going to scare anyone over here!
(Applause)
(...)

As the son of a landowner, I was able to finish sixth grade, and when I graduated from seventh grade, I could enroll in a senior high school.

If you couldn't attend high school, you couldn't go on to university. The children of farmers or workers, living at the sugar mills or in a municipality (unless it was a municipality in Santiago or Holguin or Manzanillo, or a few others) couldn't go to high school, not even high school! Of course, that left them without the possibility of graduating from university because, after high school, you had to come to Havana for further studies.

I could come to Havana because my father had the means to send me, and so I graduated from high school, and fortune lead me on to university. Did that mean that I was better than any of the hundreds of boys few of which completed the 6th grade and none of which ever graduated from high school or went on to university?

My own case was like that of many others, I mentioned Mella. I could have mentioned Guiteras, or Trejo who died in one of those demonstrations on September 30, fighting against Machado. I could mention names like those that you listed at the opening of this event

Before the Revolution, there were always many noble students opposing the Batista tyranny and willing to make sacrifices, willing to die. And so, when the Batista tyranny returned with a vengeance, many students fought and many students died, and that young man from Cardenas, Manzanita as he was called, always smiling, always jovial, always affectionate with everyone, became well-known for his bravery, his integrity as when he descended the university stairs, facing the water hose of the fire trucks, or the police. That is how all of them came to be known.

If you visit the house where [Jose Antonio] Echevarria lived – Jose Antonio, we'll call him — you'll see that it is a good house, an excellent house. You could see how the students were often oblivious of their social or class origins – at that age of so many hopes and dreams.

At that university, there was only one medical faculty, and one teaching hospital, yet, many students received prizes and awards, first prize in medicine and even in surgery without ever having operated on anybody.

Some made an effort – they were active and made contact with a professor, who helped them, taking part in his practice or in some hospital. That's how there were good doctors, not a huge numbers of good doctors – certainly there was a huge number of doctors who wanted to travel to the United States – they were unemployed and with the triumph of the Revolution, that's where they went, straight to the USA and Cuba was left with half of all her medical doctors, 3,000 of them, and 25% of her professors. We started at that point, until we got to where we are today, standing up almost like the capital of world medicine.

Today, our people have at their disposition at least 15 doctors for every one that remained in the country, and they are much better distributed. Cuba has thousands of doctors abroad fraternally offering their services, and the number is growing. At this time – and I specifically asked for the exact figure – we have 25,000 medical students – in first year there are about 7,000 and each year there will be at least 7,000 more – we have more than 70,000 medical doctors. There are also tens of thousands of students in the other medical sciences. We believe that there are 90,000 studying in the medical field, if we include nurses majoring in nursing, and all those in other health sector professions. All of them are part of the large number of students in our universities today.

I wanted to bring up the differences from the year when I entered university – what was our country like then? We should ask ourselves that question and meditate on it. What is our country like today, in all areas? And, we could ask the same question about eight, ten, fifteen, twenty different things. Comparison is impossible.

(...)

When I use the word "empire", I am not referring to the American people, make sure you understand me well. The American people will salvage many of the ethical values, many of the forgotten principles. They will adapt to the world we live in, if this world can save itself, and this world must save itself. Everyone should struggle and we should be the first in that struggle for the salvation of the world. Ideas are our invincible weapons.

Some speak of the battle of ideas, that battle of ideas which we have been waging for several years now and which is becoming a battle of ideas throughout the world. These ideas will triumph, these ideas must triumph. Let's carry this message, let's open the eyes of a humanity that seems condemned to extinction. It won't be eternal, as it is very likely that even the light of the Sun will go out one day. It is almost certain that there will be no way to move living, solid matter to a distance that is light years away from Earth; the laws of physics are much more rigorous, much more exact than historical or social laws.

In any case, I believe that this humanity and all the great things it is capable of creating must be preserved while it is still possible to do so. A humanity that doesn't care about the preservation of its species would be like the young student or leader, who knows that his life is very limited to just a few short years and, nevertheless, worries only about his own existence.

I have mentioned the names of a few comrades present here today, some are older, some are not so old, but we never know how long we have left. In no way do I think that any of them wants to save himself without considering the fate of this admirable and marvelous nation. Yesterday, it was but a seed and today it is a mighty tree with deep roots. Yesterday, it was filled with noble potential and today it is filled with true nobility. Yesterday, it dreamed of knowledge and today that knowledge is real, when we are just beginning in this huge university that today is Cuba.

Just look how new cadres are springing up, young cadres. There is Enrique who is leading a small army of 28,000 social workers, plus the 7,000 who are still in school perfecting their skills in that noble profession.

As you know, we are presently waging a war against corruption, against the re-routing of resources, against thievery, and there is this force which we didn't have before we started with the battle of ideas, one designed to wage this battle.

I am going to say something, just to see if it will raise the sense of honor of the construction workers because when they want to be heroic, they are. But

don't you think for a moment that stealing resources and materials is just a present-day illness, nor is it an exclusive phenomenon of the Special Period (*engendered by the economic crisis after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, Cuba being heavily integrated into the Soviet bloc –ed.*) The Special Period aggravated it, because in this period we saw the growth of much inequality and certain people were able to accumulate a lot of money.

I recall, we were building an important biotechnological center in Bejucal. There was a little cemetery close by. I was making my rounds, and one day I passed by the cemetery. There I saw a colossal market where the construction crew, both the foremen and many of the workers, had put up a market selling cement, steel rods, wood, paint, you name it, all kinds of construction materials (*state property –ed.*)

You know that construction has always been a very serious problem. We have resources now, sometimes there have been shortages, but now we have the possibility of improving the situation of construction materials. However, it's tragic – the dilemma with the workers, the weaknesses of the foremen, and of others in leading positions.

But this is nothing new. In the times I'm referring to, we needed 800 kilograms of cement to produce a ton of concrete; it was good quality concrete, the kind needed to put up floors or columns, and it was supposed to last much longer than El Morro castle and La Cabana fortress. Well then, they should use only around 200 kilograms. See the wastage, the re-routing of resources, see the larceny.

In this battle against vice there will be no truce for anyone and we shall be thoroughly scrupulous. We will appeal to everyone's sense of honor. We are sure of one thing – every human being possesses a healthy dose of honor. When one looks in the mirror, one is not always the harshest of judges, even though, in my opinion, the first responsibility of a revolutionary is to be extremely severe with oneself.

We are speaking of criticism and self-criticism, that's true, but our criticisms tend to be almost grouping criticisms – we never resort to criticism in a wider circle, we never resort to criticism on a larger scale.

For example, if an official from Public Health fudges the data documenting the existence of the Aedes Aegypti mosquito, he is summoned, he is criticized. I know some people who say: "Yes, of course, I criticize myself." And with that they are content. What a laugh! They are actually happy. So, you criticize yourself, and what about all the harm you have caused and all the millions that were lost because you were careless or acted incorrectly?

Criticism and self-criticism, it's all very good, as it did not exist in the past. However, if we are going to war we need weapons of greater caliber – we must carry out criticism and self-criticism in the school room, in the party cells and then outside the party cells, in the municipality and finally in the entire country.
(*End of Part 1*)

Let's make use of that sense of honor which, undoubtedly, we all have, because I know many who are what we call "shameless" people, and they truly are shameless but when in some local newspaper they report what this individual has done, they are filled with shame.

The thief deceives, and the person who deserves to be criticized for some lapse and he is deceitful, he is also a liar.

The Revolution has to use these weapons, and we shall use them whenever necessary! It shouldn't have to be necessary. The Revolution will establish the necessary controls.

Many have been quite pleased with the way things have been going as the song goes: "And how are you?" This is a question we could well ask of the folks who were going around with their little hose, putting gasoline into their big old cars, or receiving cash from that new rich (*man*) who wasn't even willing to pay for the gasoline he was using.

Judge for yourselves whether what I am saying describes the reality of today, the general state of disorder, not just in this, but in other things as well, with losses of millions of dollars, maybe 80 — listen, 80 is a huge bunch of millions!— it could even be 160 or 200 million dollars. Can you even conceive of what 200 million dollars mean? You've studied math. You've heard of the universities throughout the country, right? Yes or no? You are university leaders, and all the students have their rights, in some form or another, all kinds — regular day students, night students, students of this or of that. Do you know how many university students there are today? If you don't know, we can analyze it. I arrived here today, asking for data — let's see, tell me the exact number, 360,000. Yes, 360,000 as a result of the universalization of higher education (*all education is free in Cuba —ed.*)

No doubt Vecino knows. Don't get upset, Vecino, when I ask you for these figures, if you don't know them, don't worry about it.

How many regular day students are there in all the schools of higher education in the country, including the military?

If he doesn't know, someone must know. (Someone tells him: 230,000)

Enrique, does it match with your figures? (Enrique explains the distribution of the students' figures.)

Yes, 500,000, but we have to keep on adding. Those are the students in the universalization program, adding the regular day students, these two figures, that's what I was talking about, it's 500,000.

But there are other categories, I have them here. (Enrique explains that the figure includes associate professors, adding up to 75,000, together with 25,000 university professors, coming up with the sum of 100,000)

Here it says it's subdivided: "141,000 students in the regular day courses". Do we all agree on this?

"One hundred and forty thousand students are studying in the courses for workers." Are these the same ones, or not? Are they included in the 360,000? They are included in the 360,000 of the universalization program. Is that correct, or not? (Enrique explains that it is independent, that there is the regular day course, the workers' course, and the universalization.)

You mean the regular day group? (It is explained that this is the figure they are talking about). There are courses for workers who already attend university; when they enter university I think they add to the figure of 360,000. Then, there are 32,000 students in distance (*correspondence –ed.*) education. What category are those in? Are they in the 360,000? They're not in the regular day group, they're not in the workers group, yet they are students. This educational group exists.

Fine, let's go with the most conservative figure, which is enough for my purpose here. Today, there are more than 500,000 university students.

In addition, you know that we already have 958 university campuses. There's the reason why you, the FEU (University Student Federation), are already out there in the municipalities, where a total of 45 university courses are offered, and each year it grows. There are 169 municipal university campuses run by the Ministry of Higher Education – 130 university campuses in the "Alvaro Reinoso" area – of these, 84 are located in the sugar mill communities and a lot of these are included in the earlier figure – there are 18 located in prisons, campuses for higher education that have an enrollment of 594 in undergraduate programs, in socio-cultural studies – not that many yet – 240 INDER (Sports Federation) university campuses, 19 in prisons where they are studying as well, with an enrollment of 579, where 200 have just finished the first year. This is new, too – university campuses in the prisons. We also have 169 municipal university campuses for public health, 1,352 campuses in the polyclinics, health units and blood banks, in all these places they are studying various public health related courses.

There are almost 100,000 professors, full professors and associates. Many who were part of the bureaucracy in the sugar mills and in other areas are today teaching courses as associate professors – thus, the number of professors at the higher level has grown. The two groups – and I am not even mentioning the other university workers – students and professors combined, add up to a total of about 600,000. Among the students, more than 90,000 were young people who were neither attending school nor employed, many of them from poor backgrounds, and today they are showing excellent results in their university studies.

Shall I ask some questions or shall I go, more or less, by the data I have?

I've been asking about the cost, the budget for these higher education centers, right up to the last minute tonight. Carlitos handed me a figure, I believe it said 830. Vecino should know, because he is up on this data. Do you recall that one, Vecino? (Vecino says that in last year's course, it was 230 million pesos.)

No, I wish! There's a figure that someone should know. Look here, this is our Ministry of Finance. That was 2004 and I was asking about 2005, there has been an enormous growth. Last year's figures don't help me much, Vecino.

Well, what's happening to Vecino, happens to all of us, and it's a life or death matter. A few days ago, I was standing before a group of 200 university professionals, excellently prepared individuals, and I asked them: "Which of you can tell me your household's electrical bill?" Listen to this, comrades. How many do you think answered me? Just guess, use your logic.

What do you think? You just spoke here. And he's very smart – all of you are smart, but some of you are smarter. How many do you think answered my question, among those 200 university professionals? (He tells him: 100)

What do you think? Do you know how much electricity you use? (He indicates that he has some idea) What's your idea? Tell me in pesos and in kilowatts (Laughter). No, wait, even more – can you tell me how many incandescent bulbs you have, what brand is your refrigerator, what is your TV set – black and white or in color – and how old it is, what kind of fan you have, how much water you boil each day, what do you boil it in, do you have liquefied gas supplied by pipes, kerosene or liquefied gas supplied in small containers. No, I don't want to ask you that question, be careful, I just wanted to know how many out of the 200 knew what their electric bill was.

You, you're laughing let's see, and make a guess, an estimate...50, 70, 120. (Someone says it's the third) And what about you? (He says, at least 100) You must be thinking about how much you use, just in case you are asked, but I'm not going to ask you. (Laughter)

Do you know how many of the 200 were able to answer? You know how many? 0.0000 to the infinite power. You've studied some math, you can understand that – no-one, not one single person.

I think that all our people should meditate on that for a while

Can I ask you a question? Why did that happen? Come on, we need to think about this. We have said that we must change the world, that we must save it, that we are living in a world in its critical hour and very close to a tragic finale – I'm not exaggerating here just to impress you. That could happen when you are all younger than I am now. I am speaking for all of you, for your children, your siblings, whether they are younger or older. It's never been proven, throughout the brief history of man, not the savage history but from the time it was a man

and developed a mental capacity but still did not live in society, nor had he developed writing or a rudimentary technology.

You need to think – what kind of university leaders are you? Carlitos, where did this group that can't tell me why those 200 university professionals weren't able to answer the question about energy consumption, come from? How long do you need to meditate on this? How about a minute? Would that be long enough? (One comrade explains that the reason is because the Cuban family can afford their electrical bill, unlike in other places where people have to be more vigilant about energy consumption.)

(...)

Afterwards, we might have other questions. How much are we earning? And if the question deals with how much we are earning we might begin to understand the dream of everyone being able to live on their salary or on their adequate pension.

(...)

Many things become clear at a certain time, and thinking of a million different subjects, one can become distracted and not notice a certain phenomenon, such as the raises in personal salaries at the outset of the Special Period – these were implemented following these norms and not following a basic salary guideline. And so there was no hesitation, recently, when the worker's minimum pension was raised to 150 pesos. The lady was earning 80 pesos, 50 was the minimum in a category, in another it would be 190 and in yet another it would be 230. So now, imagine if you will, that teacher who had worked for 40 years, before the farmers' free market came into being and the intermediaries attacked the Republic. Because everyone knows very well that the farmer does go there to sell three pounds of rice. The farmer is not a merchant, he is a producer. The other one will have a truck because he stole it, or because he bought it, or because he bought it with stolen money, or because he put the motor in, for many reasons.

This is not speaking badly about the Revolution, this is in fact speaking very well of the Revolution, because we speak of a Revolution that can discuss all this and can grab the bull by the horns, even better than the Spanish bull-fighter. That one will take a red cloth, he'll close his eyes and sometimes he'll give it the coup de grace, pierce it with a pointed stick and infuriate the bull – but we have to take the bull by the horns in order to win the prize.

I've never been a fan of bull-fighting even though I did read Hemingway. When I was in Mexico, from time to time I did go to a bullfight, a corrida, or whatever it's called. At the end, you get the prize – a good torero gets the tail or an ear. They give two ears and a tail to the one who did a perfect job, along with a glorious reputation and a celebration – really don't mess with all that –

(...)

You are laughing, I'm glad because you are encouraging me to go on.

(...)

All sense of dialectics is lost when someone believes that today's economy is identical to the economy 50 or 100 or 150 years ago, or that it is identical to the one in Lenin's day or to the time when Karl Marx lived. Revisionism is a thousand miles away from my mind and I truly revere Marx, Engels and Lenin.

One day I said "I became a revolutionary in this university but it was because I came in contact with those books. Well before I had committed myself, without having read any of those books, I was questioning capitalist political economy. Even at that time, it all seemed irrational to me – and I took a political economy course in first year, taught by Portela, 900 mimeographed pages, really difficult, almost everyone failed. What a holy terror, that professor!

It was an economy that explained the laws of capitalism and examined the various theories about the origin of value – it also mentioned the Marxists, the Utopians, the Communists, in short, every economic theory. But once I began to study the political economy of capitalism, I began to have great doubts, I began to question all that, because I had grown up on a large rural estate and I remembered things, I had spontaneous ideas, just as any other utopian in this world.

Then, once I learned what Utopian Communism was, I realized that that's what I was, a utopian communist because all my ideas took off from the idea "this is not good, this is bad, this is a crime. How can we possibly have an overproduction crisis and hunger at the same time, when there is more coal, more cold, more unemployed, because there is more capacity to create wealth? Wouldn't it be simpler to produce and distribute the wealth?"

Just as Karl Marx thought in the period of (*his book*) "Critique of the Gotha Program," it seemed like limits for abundance were inherent in the social system – it seemed that just as production forces developed, they could produce everything that the human being needed to satisfy all his essential requirements almost limitlessly, be they material, cultural, etc.

We have all read that "Program," and it is certainly very respectable. It established with total clarity the difference in his concept between socialist distribution and communist distribution. Marx didn't like to play the prophet or paint pictures of the future – he was very serious, and would never have done that.

When he wrote political books like "The 18th Brumaire" and "The Civil War in France," he was a genius with a crystal clear interpretation. His "Communist Manifesto" is a classic. You can analyze it and be more or less satisfied with this and with that I moved on from Utopian Communism to a communism that was based on serious theories of social development such as dialectic materialism. There was a lot of philosophy, much fighting and arguing. But of course, it is important to pay due attention to different philosophical tendencies.

In our real world, which must be changed, every revolutionary tactician and strategist has the obligation to conceive of a strategy and a tactic that will lead to the fundamental objective, to change the real world. No divisive tactic or strategy can be a good one.

I had the privilege of meeting the followers of the Liberation Theology once when I visited Allende in Chile, in 1971. I met many priests, representatives of various religious denominations, and they were presenting the idea of united forces in the struggle, regardless of any specific religious beliefs.

The world is desperately crying out for unity and if we cannot achieve a minimum of unity, we are not going to go anywhere. Yesterday, in a meeting with the representative of the Holy See in our country, on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of uninterrupted Cuba-Vatican relations, I was saying that one of the things I most appreciated about John Paul II was his ecumenical spirit. I attended religious schools from first grade until my last year, the schools of the De La Salle Brothers and the Jesuits – it was all religious and we had to go to Mass every day. I don't criticize anyone who wants to go to Mass, but I am against forcing someone to attend every day – that's what happened to me. (...)

I have a very clear idea on this subject – ethical values are essential. Without ethical values, there can be no revolutionary values.

I don't know why the communists were credited with the philosophy of the end justifying the means, and sometimes one even asks oneself why the communists didn't defend themselves from that accusation of the end justifying the means. My explanation is that it is due to historical reasons. There was an enormous influence exerted by the first socialist state and by the first true socialist revolution born in a feudal country that still, by and large, has feudal customs and habits and a large percentage of illiteracy – but it was the first working class revolution springing from the ideas of Marx and Engels and developed by the other great genius, Lenin.

Above all, Lenin studied State issues – Marx did not speak of the worker-peasant alliance because he lived in a country that had a highly developed industrial base – Lenin recognized the under-developed world, he was aware of the country where 80 to 90 percent were peasants, and even though it had considerable strength in its railroad workers and in some other industries, Lenin saw with utmost clarity the necessity to forge a worker-peasant alliance. No one before had spoken of this – they had philosophized but they hadn't talked about this. The first socialist revolution, the first real attempt at a just and egalitarian society, takes place in a huge semi-feudal, semi-under-developed country. None of the previous societies slave-based, feudal, medieval or anti-feudal, bourgeois, or capitalist could ever propose the existence of a just society even though much was said about liberty, equality and fraternity.

Throughout history, the first serious human attempt to create the first just society began less than 200 years ago – the “Communist Manifesto” was written in

1850 and in 45 years, yes, in 45 more years, it will be 200 years old. After it was written,, the evolution of revolutionary thinking could be appreciated.

One could never have arrived at a strategy through dogma. Lenin taught us a lot, because Marx taught us to understand society. Lenin taught us to understand the State and the role of the State.

All these historical factors had a tremendous influence on revolutionary thinking, and of course there were abusive practices, at times even repugnant ones.

This is what gave rise to the slanderous accusation that for communists "the end justifies the means." I have reflected a great deal about the role of ethics. What is the ethic of a revolutionary? All revolutionary thinking begins with a bit of ethics – some values acquired from parents, others from teachers, but no one is born with these ideas. No one is born with the gift of speech, either, someone has to teach us to speak. The influence of the family is huge.

Upon studying the cases of young people who go to prison between the ages of 20 and 30, we see where they came from, the cultural level of the parents and we note that this has a decisive influence. Such an influence in fact, that during the battle of ideas, after all kinds of sociological research on this subject, we reached the conclusion that crime in Cuba was closely associated with the cultural level and social status of the parents.

It was astounding to see how very few children of university professionals and intellectuals turned to a life of crime. It was likewise incredible to see the numbers coming from economically disadvantaged families that lacked a cultural base. Another problem was of great influence – the disintegration of the family cell in the low income family with an inferior cultural level. Some children ended up staying with neither the father nor the mother, but with an aunt or a grandmother who might have health related problems or something else. This would have a noteworthy influence upon the future of the child.

It was then that we began using university brigades to visit the poorest of our districts, and we decided to mobilize 7,000 students for that. These were the students who later received a diploma, signed by me in a plane, coming back from Africa. I cannot remember how many hours it took me to sign thousands of diplomas, but they were meant to represent the value we placed on the work of these young people. I visited with them on the job, and how we learned! We had to see what was happening there in society. We needed to know many things that were unknown to us – how the people were actually living.

It was then that we discovered, for example, the case of a working mother, earning a salary, with a severely mentally handicapped and bed-ridden child who needed constant care. Some family member would look after the child while the mother was at work. One day, the family member left, or died, and that woman was forced to choose between the job, which supported her, or the care of her child

I'd like to tell you that we decided that every woman in similar circumstances ought to have the possibility to choose, according to her job and according to the needs and importance of her work for society, whether to receive a salary so that she could look after her child, or the State would pay someone a salary to care for the child while she was at work. This is just one example among many.

The student brigades also helped in saving the lives of persons who, for example, were going to commit suicide due to mental illness or depression or some other reason. We learned so many things! There were about 20,000 or 30,000 people older than 60 who lived alone and didn't even have a bell to let someone know that they might have a chest pain or some other health problem. Such was our society.

We looked into the income these people were receiving from a pension or from social security. Much of the data doesn't even appear in any statistic, or census. We kept on discovering more and more, accomplishing things and forging ideas. We put together more than 100 social programs, many of which have come to fruition a while ago. We haven't publicized all that we have accomplished. What glorious days those were! Starting basically with the groups of young people and with the support of the Party and all the institutions, we developed that battle of ideas around the return from the United States of the kidnapped little boy.

We shall always be grateful for the circumstances that accelerated our knowledge of society and our learning process. I think that we would not be doing what we are doing today if it had not been for that experience.

We created the first course for social workers. We needed to know what the minimum salaries were. I would like you to know that the minimum salary increase was made after we had crossed the country from end to end. Social assistance was one third of everything that was established that year, taking it up to 129 pesos on average. When the pensions were increased, the effect was much stronger as the minimum pension was raised to 150, to 190 in the following category and 230 in the one following that. The minimum salary was also substantially raised.

We were speaking of the importance of the ethical factor. We would have to research the reasons for the confusion. I believe that historical events influenced the idea that for a communist the end justifies the means. There were international events that were difficult to understand — I've mentioned them on more than one occasion — in spite of everything, there was the precedent of France and Britain, those two great colonial powers and the greatest in the world, attempting to hurl Hitler against the USSR. I think that the imperialist plans to throw Hitler against the USSR would never have justified the pact made between Hitler and Stalin — it was a very hard blow. The communist parties, well-known for their discipline, were obliged to defend the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and to politically bleed to death.

Before this pact, the necessity for unification in the anti-fascist struggle led to the alliance in Cuba of the Cuban communists with Batista. By then, Batista had suppressed the famous strike of April 1934 that followed his

coup against the provisional government in 1933 which was unquestionably revolutionary in nature and to a large degree, the result of the historical fight of the workers' movement and the Cuban communists. Before that anti-fascist alliance, Batista had assassinated countless numbers of people and robbed incredible sums of money, and had become a flunky of Yankee imperialism. The order came from Moscow – organize the anti-Fascist front. It was a pact with the devil. Here the pact was with the fascist ABC – and Batista, a fascist of a different color, who was both a criminal and robber of the public coffer.

These were very difficult events, and one followed on the heels of another, the most disciplined communists in the world – and I say that with all sincere respect – were the communist parties of Latin America. Among these was the Cuban Communist Party. I have always held them in very high regard, and I still do. Today we can speak of this subject because we are entering a new phase.

(End Part 2)

The members of the Cuban Communist Party were the most disciplined people, the most honorable and the most self-sacrificed for this country. The Party legislators handed over a portion of their salaries. They were the most honorable people in the country notwithstanding the erroneous direction that was imposed by Stalin on the international movement. How can we blame them? They were faced with the dilemma of accepting or not something which was, in my criteria, absolutely correct: the unity of all communists. "Workers of the world, unite!", or openly destroy, under the circumstances, all discipline. *(See editorial comment at the end of this article, plus "The meaning of the Ochoa Affair – Nov. 1989 report from the F.I. journal International Viewpoint –ed.)*

I am not one of those people who criticize historical characters demonized by world reaction so that they become a joke for the bourgeoisie and the imperialists. Neither am I going to commit the stupidity of not daring to say what needs to be said on a day like today. We must have the courage to recognize our own errors exactly for that reason, for only in that manner will we reach the objective that we hope to attain. A tremendous vice was created, the abuse of power, the cruelty and, in particular, the habit of one country imposing its authority, that of one hegemonic party, over all other countries and parties.

For more than 40 years we have maintained relations with the Latin American revolutionary movement and they have been extremely close relations. But, it has never even occurred to us to tell anybody what they should be doing. We have seen every revolutionary movement zealously defend its rights and its prerogatives.

I remember crucial moments. I will state this here, and it will only be part of the story. When the USSR crumbled *(in 1989 – ed.)*, many people were left on their own, including the Cuban revolutionaries. But we knew what we had to do, what our options were. Everywhere, revolutionary movements were carrying on their struggle. I am not going to say which ones, I'm not going to say who they

were – but they were all very serious revolutionary movements and they asked us whether there should be some negotiation process in the face of such a desperate situation, whether the struggle should continue or not, whether negotiations should begin with the other side to strike a peace accord, even though everyone knew the consequences of such a peace.

I would tell them "You cannot ask us our opinion, as it will be you fighting the battle, and you alone who will die, not us. We know what we are going to do and what we are prepared to do – but these are decisions which each one must make for themselves." That was the highest expression of our respect for the other movements. We have never attempted to impose ourselves on the basis of our knowledge and experience, or the enormous respect they show for our revolution which motivated them to listen to our point of view.

At that moment we didn't know whether there would be advantages or disadvantages for Cuba as a result of the decisions that they would take – "You make your own decisions," we said. And so at the decisive moment, each one of them charted their own path. We are a small island here in the Caribbean sea, 90 miles away from the empire and within inches of their illegal military base, (*Cuba is*) a thousand times weaker than the USSR at the time of its pact with Hitler, or at the time it was giving orders to the communist parties. Poland was invaded by the Nazis and the Soviet army had been purged of its best and most brilliant leaders due to scheming by the Nazis. At the time of the Weimar Republic established in Germany after World War I, in the midst of an incredible economic crisis unleashed as a consequence of the Treaty of Versailles imposed by England, France and the United States, there was in Germany a strengthening of the revolutionary movement and a growth of the most reactionary nationalist forces.

Hitler wins in the elections against the liberal bourgeois parties and the militant communist and revolutionary forces. But a much more decisive factor was the terrible resentment of the German people against those unfair conditions dictated by the victors. And it is against this background that Hitler comes to power. In a book he wrote, Hitler casually declared that his aim was to seek vital space in USSR territory for the German race, at the expense of the Russians whom he considered to be an inferior race. All this was written, and the communist movement took on very clear ideas and concepts to oppose Nazi fascism.

In our country, after so many revolutionaries had fallen, since the communists were the most conscientious, the most militant and the most honorable, the Marxist Leninist Party was led, of course, to that alliance with Batista, the same who had repressed students and the public in general. The young people resented his power very much – the workers who had always seen their interests continuously defended by the communist leaders, were firmly loyal to the Party (*but no help in supporting the aborted pre-revolution general strike –ed.*), but it was among the youth and wide popular sectors of society that there was the most justified rejection of Batista.

I believe that the experience of that first socialist State, a State that should have been fixed and not destroyed, was a bitter one. You may be sure that we have thought many times about that incredible phenomenon where one of the mightiest powers in the world disintegrated the way it did – for this (*the Soviet Union –ed.*) was a power that had matched the strength of the other super-power and had paid with the lives of more than 20 million of her people in the battle against fascism.

Is it that revolutions are doomed to fall apart, or that men cause revolutions to fall apart? Can either man or society prevent revolutions from collapsing? I could immediately add to this another question: Do you believe that this revolutionary socialist process can fall apart, or not? (Exclamations of "No!!") Have you ever given that some thought? Have you ever deeply reflected about it?

Were you aware of all these inequalities that I have been talking about? Were you aware of certain generalized habits? Did you know that there are people who earn forty or fifty times the amount one of those doctors over there in the mountains of Guatemala, part of the "Henry Reeve" Contingent, earns in one month? It could be in other faraway reaches of Africa, or at an altitude of thousands of meters, in the Himalayas, saving lives and earning 5% or 10% of what one of those dirty little crooks earns, selling gasoline to the new rich, diverting resources from the ports in trucks and by the ton-load, stealing in the dollar shops, stealing in a five-star hotel by exchanging a bottle of rum for another of lesser quality and pocketing the dollars for which he sells the drinks.

Just how many ways of stealing do we have in this country? Why is it that we read every day in the opinion polls that people are asking about when the "kids" are coming to the dollar stores, to the drugstores, or to all the other places? Everyone is full of admiration for these "kids", I mean the social workers, who came out of economically disadvantaged environments and are now highly prepared and trained.

I looked at those faces, as I look at you now and faces tell me more than any article, any book or cliché (*overly common expression*). You are aware that since the beginning of civilization, since the inception of private property, there has been a class difference. The world has only known a class based society, all the rest is pre-history.

How is it that I can tell that you come from economically disadvantaged environments? None of you entered university because you were the son or daughter of an important landowner.

Here we are and I have been given the honor of sitting here. Which of you has a father who owns 1,000 hectares, or more than 10,000 hectares? I won't ask each one of you, because all I need to do is to look at you to know whether by chance one of you is the child of some professional, of the middle class. You applauded loudly because I know where you are coming from, and you know that today, there is no one left that cuts sugar cane by hand. Who were the cane cutters?

I could also explain why we no longer cut cane today; there are no cane cutters here and the heavy machinery destroys the sugar cane fields. The abuses of the developed world and the subsidies have led to sugar prices that were scraping the bottom of the trash bins, on the world markets. In the meantime, Europe was paying its growers two or three times more.

In the days when the USSR paid our sugar at 27 or 28 cents, and paid in oil because it was cheaper to pay for sugar with oil than to buy the beet sugar produced labor intensively in the Russian fields, the USSR was a country whose economy grew extensively, not intensively, and so their labor force was never enough and the beet harvest required many workers.

So, we are now coming to the point of asking ourselves this question – I have already reached this point myself, some years ago — in the face of this super-powerful empire that stalks us and threatens us, that has transition plans and military action plans in this specific historical moment.

They are awaiting a natural and absolutely logical event, the death of someone. In this case, they have honored me by thinking of me. It might be a confession of what they have not been able to do in a long time. If I were a vain man, I could be proud of the fact that those guys admit that they are waiting for me to die, and this is the time. They are waiting for me to die, and everyday they invent something new. Castro has this, he's suffering from that, and now the latest is that they say Castro has Parkinson's disease. (*Castro died in 2017 –ed.*) (...)

Forty-six years have passed and the history of this country is known and the people of this nation know it well. They also know their neighbor very well, the empire, with its size and its power, its strength and its wealth, its technology and its control over the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, all the world of finances. That country has imposed on us the most incredibly iron-clad blockade, which was discussed at the United Nations where 182 nations supported Cuba, voting freely even though they ran a risk voting against the empire. The island has achieved this today, not during the days when the European socialist countries stood together with us, but after the socialist camp had disappeared and the USSR had fallen apart. We forged this Revolution alone, against all risk, for many long years and we had realized that if the day ever come when we would be under direct attack by the US, no one would ever fight for us, nor would we ask anyone to do so.

It would have been naive of us to think, or to ask for, or to expect that one super-power would fight against the other, in this day and age of modern technological development, to intervene in this island 90 miles away. We came to the conclusion that such support would never happen. And another thing – once we asked them directly, a few years before the collapse – "Tell us frankly." "No," they said. It was the answer we knew they would give and from that point on, more than ever, we accelerated the development of our concept and we perfected the tactical and strategic ideas which have seen to the triumph and victory of the Revolution. The Revolution's strength began with the struggle of seven armed

men against an enemy with 80,000 troops including marines, soldiers and police, tanks, airplanes and all kinds of modern weaponry of the time. What an infinitely huge difference between our weapons and the weapons of that army, trained by the US, supported by the US and supplied by the US. After we received our reply, we held on to our concepts more firmly than ever, we deepened them and we gained in strength to the point where we can affirm today that our country is militarily invulnerable, and not because of arms of mass destruction.

They may have tanks to spare, but we have just what we need, not one to spare! All their technology collapses like ice-cubes beneath the noon-day sun in a hot summer. And again, just like when we possessed only seven guns and a handful of bullets. Today, we possess much more than those seven guns. We have a people who have learned to handle weapons; we have an entire nation which, in spite of our errors, holds such a high degree of culture, education and conscience that it will never allow this country to become their colony again.

This country can self-destruct – this Revolution can destroy itself, but they can never destroy us – we can destroy ourselves, and it would be our fault.

I have been fortunate to have lived many years. That is not a special merit but rather, it is an exceptional opportunity to share with you everything that I am telling you, young leaders, all the leaders of the masses, all the leaders of the workers' movement, the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, the women's groups, the farmers, the veterans of the Revolution, organized throughout the country, hundreds of thousands who have struggled through the years carrying out glorious internationalist missions, students like yourselves, intelligent, well prepared, healthy, organized. You are everywhere, in each one of those 900 or so campuses and the 1000 plus and the 2000 plus that we shall quickly have – and it will continue growing until (it numbers) more than 500,000 and 600,000, with new graduates every year. And those that graduate, like our physicians in Venezuela, will be studying with the aid of computers, videos and cassettes, all the audio-visual means necessary, to attain that scientific degree, that Master's or that Doctorate in medical sciences, everyone, one hundred percent of them.

Today we may speak about thousands of specialists in comprehensive general medicine and tomorrow we will be speaking about thousands of professionals in medical sciences, just to mention one branch. Let's not forget that once we had 3,000 doctors and no university professors. Many left this very university. Today, we can say that in a few short years, there will be 100,000 doctors. When those are not enough, there will be 150,000. And we will have university professors, just as we have thousands of programmers and program designers and researchers. Many changes are coming because we need to know much in a short time.

I was just telling you about a battle and I asked how much it cost. Don't think that these 28,000 social workers will be working for nothing. I've already told you how I knew that they came from the most modest of the segments of the population. I saw it in their faces. Involuntarily, I have developed the habit

of guessing the province from which my compatriots come. I mentioned it in jest, and I say it to the doctors who are leaving on their missions, to the social workers, that each one belongs to a micro-tribe. I recognize those that come from Manzanillo, for example, those from Havana, from Guantanamo, from Santiago – it is impressive to see people from the most humble backgrounds in this country transform into 28,000 social workers and thousands of university students, university students! What a force! And soon we shall also be seeing those who graduated a while ago in the Sports Coliseum.

The coliseum teaches us about Marxist-Leninism – it teaches us about social classes. A short while ago, about 15,000 doctors and medical students, some of them from ELAM (Latin American School of Medicine), and some from as far away as Eastern Timor, were gathered in the coliseum. It was an unforgettable event.

The image of those 15,000 white coats all together on graduation day can never be forgotten. That was the day that the "Henry Reeve" Contingent was created following in the tradition of many doctors who have been to places where exceptional events have taken place, in a time span much too brief to even imagine.

A short while later, the more than 3,000 young art instructors graduated – it was the second group, following that first graduation in Santa Clara. There are now 3,000 more of them already working. The next 3,000 that are in their last year of studies are also at work. And so they multiply. One day we shall assemble half at least of the social workers that are today developing one of the most transcendental tasks ever taken on by a group of young people. There is a group of Social Work Specialists who have joined forces with these young university students and they have become as one.

And what can we expect from the work of these youth? We shall put a stop to many of these vices – thievery, diversion of materials and money draining away towards the new rich.

Does anybody think that we are going to confiscate funds? No, money is sacred – everybody who has their money in the bank cannot be touched.

But look at something new, we are going to battle against an abundance of vices – theft, re-routing, one by one, we will get to them all in some order. They don't suspect it. Do you have any ideas? Very good, then!

Certain vices can be very deep-seated. We started with Pinar del Rio to ascertain what was happening in the gas stations that sell gas in dollars. We soon discovered that there was as much gas being stolen as sold. Almost half the amount was being stolen and in other places more than half.

Well, what is happening in Havana? Will they mend their ways? Not really, everything is fun and games. Perhaps they thought that the social workers were idiots, little boys and girls. It is interesting to note that 72% of the social workers are women – I don't think something like that has happened before — just

as the doctors who are raising the prestige of our country and opening the way so that this country can use her human capital, something which is much more precious than oil. I repeat – it is much more precious than oil or gold, and any country that has oil is saying "Wow, how lucky! I have this natural resource that is running out!" We do too, and we are going to increase oil production, of course. It's fortunate we didn't discover it earlier, because it would have been wasted.

Human capital is not a non-renewable product. It is renewable, and better, still it can be multiplied. Each year human capital increases and receives what was called, in my time, a compound interest. Add up what it is worth and receive an interest for what it is worth and for what it has earned – in five years you have much more capital, and in 100 years, it boggles the mind.

Allow me to tell you that today, human capital is practically superior to almost all of the others put together, and it is advancing very quickly to become the country's most valuable resource. I'm not exaggerating.
(...)

We have had to do many more things like this, things that would make the stones speak. It's not your fault but what was happening to us? Why did we not see all this? The USSR had already collapsed, we had been left without oil overnight with no raw materials, no food, no cleaning products, nothing. Probably, it was good that this happened, after all. Maybe it was necessary that we suffered as we did, so that we are ready to give our lives a hundred times over before we surrender the country or the Revolution, the Revolution we so deeply believe in.

Maybe it was all necessary, for we have committed many errors. It is these errors that we are trying to correct, if you will, that we are in the process of correcting.

One of the corrections made by the Party and the Government was to put an end to the prerogative of 3,000 citizens to manage the country's currency, in the situation of debt – they could have a debt of such and such a size — nobody was guaranteeing the payment of that debt – when the debt expired the State was obliged to pay it. It might have been an unnecessary or subjective debt and if the State did not pay it, its credit could be considerably affected.

Today that has changed – I would like to tell you that the country is paying off every last cent with not even a second's delay, and credit grows constantly. Money is not being thrown out of the windows – it is spent in great quantities, yes, but not in those colossal amounts that we saw in the sugar industry.

You will be even more amazed when I tell you that, according to its inventory, the Ministry of Sugar has 2000 to 3000 more trucks than it had when it was producing 8 million tons of sugar. It's tough, but I'm going to tell it like it is – I'm going to talk about it and no matter how many times I tell it and no matter how I criticize this in public, I am not afraid to shoulder the responsibility for what needs to be done. We cannot afford to be soft. Let them

attack and criticize me, I know the reality of the situation, I know it very well. There must be quite a few who are hurting – kings, czars, emperors.

Is everyone like that? No! Are all our ministers like that? No. Some ministers have been very inefficient. Sometimes we are soft on officials who hold important positions, but I have this old habit – I like to work with the comrades who have made mistakes. I've done that many times over. As long as I see positive qualities and what is missing is the correct guidance. Sometimes it is just a question of short-sightedness, in spite of all the mechanisms and institutions in the country to defend itself, to struggle and to fight with honor, without abuse of power, for nothing would ever justify the abuse of power. We must be audacious enough to tell the truth, but not all of it because we don't need to say everything at once. Political battles follow certain tactics, with adequate information, following their own path. I am not telling you everything – I am telling you the indispensable. Don't worry about what the bandits are saying or what the news services will report tomorrow or the day after – he who laughs last laughs best.

There are some news reports saying that Castro is launching an offensive, Castro is launching his social workers, that we are renouncing all the progressive advances made so far. The progressive advance means that you are selling a pound of rice for four pesos, it's robbery! What retiree would be able to buy that? A pensioner with his 80 pesos and five pounds of rice in his ration book cannot buy that. Havana had privileges and used to receive six. Havana used to receive one additional pound, and so did Santiago, but the rest of the provinces received five. We must measure it ounce after ounce, 100 grams, how it grows. What's happening with the ration book? You have rice and you exchange it for sugar, and so on.

Today, everybody receives two more pounds of rice. I'd like to see the day when that will be enough. It's not far, but now they throw it at the chickens. Well, that's a whole other story. We are getting close to the time when everyone will have enough rice. We are also preparing conditions so that the ration book will be a thing of the past. We want to change something that was once useful and now is in the way. And if you would like to buy more rice, buy more rice and less sugar, or something else, not just red beans or black beans. You can buy whatever color of beans you like and cook them as you like. I warn you, you will have to pay a lot of attention to cooking, and quite soon.
(...)

From the moment that you enroll in nursery school until the day that you graduate with the honorable PhD in agricultural science, physical science, medical science, it never costs you a penny. If you're lucky you get an apartment, although it is likely that you will never be that lucky – okay, let's say your father was given it because he was a construction worker, but you don't pay rent, you don't pay taxes. Perhaps you are quite sharp and you say “I am going to rent it out to some visitors, in convertible pesos.” So, I am charged 30 cents in tax for every dollar that I receive – okay, I was practically given this house, it cost me 500 dollars, I make 800 a month and I give 240 to the State, a few dollars here and there, and I earn 500 dollars – 5 times two (is) 10, 12 – 500

pesos. You can go, by virtue of those sacred freedoms of trade laws, and buy a pound of rice for 3 pesos on the open market, you can go up to a gas station attendant and say 'Look, I have a 1950's car because I bought it from such and such a person. I paid for it in hard currency or in convertible pesos, and I have someone who gets me the fuel, and I'm going on a 300 km trip, and I have three girlfriends, and this hunk of tin is an attractive offer with all the problems with transport. Who's not going to want me with this car?' (Laughter)

If you want, dear students, I could add that those who use 300 kilowatts consume 40% of the residential electricity produced in the country, 40% of this electricity could represent – a cautious and conservative figure – 400 million dollars generously and benevolently given by the State to the biggest users. And who are the biggest users? Go and visit one of the new rich and take a look at how many electrical appliances they have.

I remember that when we were analyzing the issue of power consumption we discovered that a 'paladar' [private] restaurant consumed 11,000 kilowatts and that this stupid State was subsidizing the owner, the owner of the place where the bourgeoisie likes to take their guests so that they can taste the lobster and the shrimps, all of it stolen from Batabano, a miracle of the private business, that little place with four or five tables. But, of course, this totalitarian, abusive State is against progress because it is against plundering. So, the State is subsidizing the 'paladar' with more than 1,000 dollars a month, and I found this out because I asked how much they spent, how much it was worth, and this fellow was paying the electricity at that price, 11,000 kilowatts. I think that once the total exceeded 300 he was paying 30 cents of a peso per kilowatt. Didn't you know? No, none of you know anything. (Something is said to him) No, don't make things up, I have made a lot of enquiries and I have been misinformed on many occasions. It is 30 cents, 11,000 kilowatts, he was paying 3,000 pesos. Look what he was paying, the State was getting rich because he paid 3,000 Cuban pesos, some 120 dollars – but it costs the State – on that occasion I calculated that a kilowatt was 10 cents of a dollar, now 11,000, at a cost of 15 cents for the State, we'll have to pass the collection plate here, I don't know how you are all doing for cash but we have to subsidize that 'paladar', and as it costs 1,250 dollars a month and there are 400 of you, don't just hand over the 20 cents when you leave, also donate around 3 dollars please, for the monthly payment. Pay the bill because someone has to subsidize that 'paladar' (*private operator –web ed.*) That's free trade, that's progress, that's development, that's a step forward.

We are going to show them what progress is. What development is, what justice is, what it is to end the theft. And I warn them – it will be with the wholehearted support of the people. We know what we are doing it is pure math and it's in the numbers. We know how much everything that we are going to save is worth. I don't want to talk about what we are buying now, nor do I want to elaborate much more about the billions, regardless of whether or not the power cuts will come to an end, and believe me, they will end, of that you can be sure.

(...)

Actually, we have ideas that we won't be explaining now – the exact time it will take to remove every single one of the gasoline powered trucks and other gas guzzlers off the road.

We've been speaking about saving two-thirds of the same. By the end of 2006, we believe we shall have saved no less than a million kilowatt/hours in electricity. Today this amount is generated and inefficiently used. With the new equipment, we shall have the capacity to generate at least 1.4 million kilowatt/hours, not counting the plants that are being built. That is more certain than everything which has been announced and accomplished, and everything that has not been mentioned and accomplished.

I don't like to talk much about it, but there are ideas which we have already begun to apply extensively. We will take advantage of the fact that in winter there is a 15% decrease in energy consumption, since each new piece of equipment must have its energy assured. We need to be sure that the family has cooking facilities if this should fail – now there are many problems, but they are all being studied in detail, and all of them are being solved conscientiously, as Marx would have said.

I won't go on any more, but soon I shall return and we will continue talking.

I have broached many different subjects. We have to be resolute – either we defeat these deviations and strengthen the Revolution by destroying any of the illusions that the empire may have, or we can rather say – either we radically defeat these problems or we die. We must repeat the motto 'Patria o Muerte!' (Homeland or Death!) This is all very serious and we must use all necessary forces, if need be, the 28,000 social workers. I would guess that all those who are out there re-routing gasoline should be well advised so that we don't have to discover, point by point who it is that is stealing fuel. The 10,000 social workers are ready and the city of Havana has been transformed into a spectacular school where we are learning what it is that we have to do. They learn more every day. The 28,000 will be joined by the 7,000 who are still studying.

If 28,000 are not enough and some of these are already on the job, creating anti-corruption groups, so that each problem needing observation is in the hands of a group – you can find members of the communist youth, of the mass organizations, of the veterans of the Revolution, as we said at the coliseum.

The problems I have mentioned are all being seriously addressed – you cannot imagine the enthusiasm, the seriousness, dignity, and pride they feel when they realize the great good that they are bringing to the country.

Fuel and energy are the most important issues, but not the only ones. How much has been stolen from factories such as those that produce medicines. There is one such in La Lisa where it was necessary to remove the manager and almost 100 others – they were involved in the theft of medicines. A hundred were let go – now we need find people to replace them. This is not enough nor is it the only solution.

We have already bought 1000 buses, but not to charge the historical prices. Some of these are already resolving some of those problems mentioned, and the others will be here in a few months time.

Transportation will receive some subsidy, but not 90% – that would ruin us, so it must be minimal. We have to apply maximum rationality to salaries, prices, pensions. There should be zero over-spending and wastage. We are not a capitalist country where everything is left to chance.

Subsidies and free services will be considered only in essentials. Medical services will be free, so will education and the like. Housing will not be free. Maybe there will be some subsidy, but the rents that are paid in installments need to come close to the actual cost. You may well ask "What are we going to pay all this with?" It will be in a large part from what is being wasted and stolen today, and from the non-negligible income the country is receiving. Everything that is within our reach everything belongs to the people, the only thing not to be allowed is egotistical and irresponsible wastage of our wealth.

I really had no intention of getting involved in a dissertation on such sensitive matters, but it would have been a crime not to take advantage of the moment and tell you some of the things related to the economy, to the material life of the country, to the future of the Revolution, to revolutionary ideas, to the reasons why we began this struggle, to the colossal strength we possess today, the country we are today and we may continue to be, which is much more than we are now.

I mentioned that we have reached military invulnerability, that this empire cannot afford the price of the lives that would be lost, numbering as many or more than in Vietnam, if they try to occupy our land. The American people are not willing to allow their leaders to waste thousands of lives on their imperial quests. Let's see if the tally reaches 3,000 in Iraq – it is at 2,000 already, and on a daily basis the news is grimmer for those who started that war.

And let's see what will happen with this dirty blockade. There are many Americans upset because they couldn't accept the help of our Cuban doctors – the majority was in favor and the local authorities more so.

Let's see, because we can show them that it would be better to get rid of that trash because it will never destroy our Revolution. We can tell Europe – Keep your humanitarian aid, you hypocrites, keep it all, because we don't need it. What a wonderful thing it is to be able to say that we do not need the help of Europe or of the empire! Finish it whenever you want even though we don't care if you do or not, because we have learned how to save, to think, to grow – we have learned to multiply our efforts so that we can rise to the challenge of our colossal adversary.

I have been speaking to you with all the trust that I can. I have told you about every one of the main tasks facing the social workers' brigades and about their important activities. Sometimes they had to go out without warning, quickly and with discipline and efficiency. We had thousands in the city of Havana and we mobilized thousands more as a reserve.

They are already accomplishing many tasks. If we don't have enough of them, how many students are there in this university? Right now I will say to you what I said to them – if 28,000 are not enough we will meet with you, students of the glorious Federation of University Students and you will find 28,000 other students for us (applause), and in pairs, together with the social workers who have been acquiring some experience, you will be mobilized – and if 56,000 are not enough we will meet with you again and you will find 56,000 reinforcements for us.

You know who will shelter them? The people will, for they have great respect for these kids, and they no longer say: "These (kids) can't fix anything", "This will never (complete their job)". And together with you, together with the people, we will be proving that it can be done. And I think that we shall have many more resources, not just to meet the necessities, but so that we may further develop, because we are managing things much better. Much of what we accomplish, we do with the resources that we have saved. We are saving hundreds of millions of dollars and now it will depend on the rhythm and efficiency with which we proceed on every task.

New ideas come up everyday. What we can save in energy we can immediately convert into resources. The worst and most inefficient thermo-electric plants will still be around, but we won't need them – they will be around as back up, ready to fill in if anything unexpected happens on each step of the way.

The country spends 3,800,000 tons of fuel yearly just for the production of electricity. Today, our energy system works at only 60% capacity. We shall never again build a thermo-electric plant. The plants that shall be built will be using gas, the ones that (utilize the) extraction of oil; they will be plants running on combined cycles that can be paid off within four or five years and can produce a kilowatt for 2 cents of a dollar.

(...)

I told you that our credit has grown. Our country has the ability to mobilize millions and millions of dollars. Tell that to "little Bush" so that he and all his schemers can become bitter if they want. Let them say what they want tomorrow, about the "poor guys", these "noble individuals" who were stealing "ever so little", about those persons who charge anything they want for just about anything. I tell them as I am telling you – "Pay for the fuel that you are using." Actually, why are we handing over everything to that bandit, that miser or that egoist who would like us to pay 15 cents for every kilowatt that he uses? What world economic law obliges us to do that? Let them get ready for the bill that we are preparing for them. We have already devaluated the dollar, but that dollar is still enjoying too many privileges.

Of course, neither the dollar nor those that go around stealing – they don't have our Meteorological Institute and our Dr. Rubiera, and now a hurricane is coming. Nobody knows where this hurricane is going or how strong the winds are going to be. The only sure thing is that it is a Category Five Hurricane. (Laughter) A Category Five Hurricane is one that leaves nothing standing and it won't abuse anyone, it won't starve anyone, it just uses the simplest of principles – the ration book must disappear, those who work and produce will receive more, and they will be able to buy more – those who worked for decades will receive more and will have more. The country will have much more, but it will never be a consumer society. It will be a society of knowledge, of culture, of the most extraordinary human development imaginable – development in art, culture, science, but not for chemical weapons, with a breadth of liberty that no one will be able to dismantle. We know this already, we don't need to proclaim it, but it is worth remembering.

We have earned the right to do what we are going to do today, to have at our disposition almost a million professionals, intellectuals and artists, to have at our disposition 500,000 university students, in all areas of science, capable of all activities.

I am proclaiming that our society will truly be an entirely new society. In this long distance race, we are already several laps ahead of our closest competitors. The merit lies with the empire for it presented us with an enormous threat and it was this challenge that spurred us on. Theirs is the merit and the only thing our noble, generous, brave and intelligent people have done is to take up that challenge – today it does so, with the force of a multitude of developed intellects.

Today, as we speak of 500,000, we know that this number was produced in a very short time, just three short years ago, and look at how many are here today, and how many there will be tomorrow.

And there will be more – for we have thousands of Latin American students studying medicine. In our country alone, we will be educating 100,000 doctors in the next 10 years. We are involved in creating the best medical capital in the world, not just for us, but for the peoples of Latin America and other parts of the world. We are being asked to educate more doctors, and we have the ability and the facilities, and no one can educate them better than we can. We have developed educational methodologies that we have not even dreamed of. We shall see all this, and very soon.

The ELAM ([Latin American School of Medicine] will have not just 12,000 medical students, there are also 2,000 Bolivian undergraduates here – some are at the ELAM, others are in Cienfuegos living with serious, professional and culturally prepared families whose psychological profile was investigated together with that of the student and his or her family – a new and unique experience.

I was talking about this yesterday, calling it solidarity transformed into a colossal wealth. How could we house 100,000 higher education students? We know what it costs to house and feed each one of them.

In the first phase of the Revolution, we constructed hundreds of high schools and today we have less than half of the enrolment of the seventies. We know what it costs to repair these schools and how long

it takes to do so. There will be many medical schools for 400 to 450 students with excellent conditions, with all the necessary materials for study, audiovisual equipment and interactive programs. As we all know, and as comrade Machadito said, if he had had such resources during the five years of his education, he would have been able to acquire in one year all the information it took him five years to achieve at that time. This doesn't mean that we shall produce doctors in one year, but that in the course of six years of study, a doctor will acquire the knowledge that traditional methods would have given him in 20 years! We are thinking of excellence, and this is what we are constantly increasing.

We are aware of what our compatriots are doing in other areas. We are in constant communication. They are the 'Henry Reeve' Contingent and many others like them. A beautiful story is being written these days, the like of which has not been seen in history or during the life of our Revolution.

I am very happy that on a day like today, the Day of the Student, and the date you have chosen to celebrate the 60th anniversary of my entry into this university, I feel very well both physically and spiritually, meeting with you here. There were many ideas running through my mind, and I had to organize my memories of yesterday with the new ideas of today, and be careful so that I wouldn't say anything I shouldn't, and so that I would say everything that I wanted to.

This month I think that we will have to take some measures – I was discussing this with the comrades. We cannot lose a second because things are going on constantly, and so it must begin this month.

We urgently need to discourage the wasting of electricity. I call it "discouragement" – it is not the definitive formula. That will be something else. But as of now we need to be distributing a massive amount of equipment. The more we save, the more equipment we can distribute, and the more equipment we distribute, the more energy we'll save and the more money we'll begin to collect starting at the end of this month and going to the beginning of next year. That is why it is urgent to begin in December, establishing certain limitations on the wasting of electricity.

Not a cent more of increases for those who are consuming 100 – a little more for those consuming 150, 200 and 300 kilowatts. There will be people who consume 300 who will have to pay a bit more, but not too much. Instead of two dollars they will have to pay, perhaps four for 300. But don't consume more than 300 – turn off your lights and the fan – don't leave the TV turned on. I haven't even mentioned that there are a million television sets, 40,000 already here and more coming, 50 watts, so that there will be no more black and white sets.

And we will continue saving. The laboratories will determine what each piece of equipment consumes, everything will be measured and all calculations will be less than the figures show – no detail will escape notice, or at least very few. Every day there will be more experiments, and more experiments. There will be a test run in a municipality, the poorest one, and that's why all the social workers are here today. Another group is covering Cienfuegos delivering the new light bulbs.

Enrique, when will the gas stations in that province be occupied? It doesn't matter, they know it's going to happen, they can imagine. (Enrique explains that it will begin on Saturday, that 158,000 light bulbs have been replaced in Cienfuegos and the rest will be finished tomorrow.)

(...)

The empire was hoping that Cuba would have many more 'paladares' (*private businesses –ed.*) but it appears that there will be no more of them. What do they think – that we have become neo-liberals? No one here has become a neo-liberal. We will prove to them the irrefutable crisis of their theories, just as we have shown them the disaster of their blockade, their aggression and their destabilizing actions.

Next year there may be fewer abstentions when the United Nations votes against the blockade, even though really there is no one left besides the fascist and genocidal ally that always votes unscrupulously

with the empire. The world has to wage this battle.

Firstly, nobody should have the right to manufacture nuclear weapons. There should be no privileges for imperialism to impose its hegemonic rule and to take the natural resources and raw materials away from the nations of the Third World. We have denounced that a thousand times, but that is not the solution. The first solution for any Third World country is to not fear the empire; we have always acted that way and they are beginning to feel demoralized.

Secondly, we will strictly defend, in all the public squares of the world, the right to produce nuclear fuel. And we are not afraid to do so, let us make that perfectly clear (applause).

There must be an end to stupidity in the world, and to abuse, and to the empire based on might and terror. It will disappear when all fear disappears. Every day there are more fearless countries. Every day there will be more countries that will rebel and the empire will not be able to keep that infamous system alive any longer.

Salvador Allende (*the Chilean reformist president deposed and murdered by the military with CIA connivance – and Canadian approval — in 1974 –ed*) once spoke of things that would happen rather sooner than a later. I believe that sooner rather than later the empire will disintegrate and the American people will enjoy more freedom than ever, they will be able to aspire to more justice than ever before – they will be able to use science and technology for their own improvement and for the betterment of humanity – they will be able to join all of us who fight for the survival of the species – they will be able to join all of us who fight for opportunities for the human species.

It's only fair to struggle for that and that is why we must use all our energy, all our effort and all our time to be able to say with the voice of millions, or hundreds of thousands of millions of people 'It is worthwhile to have been born! It is worthwhile to have lived!' (Ovation)

(End of Part 4)

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